Al-Hidaya
No 5

SHABE BARA'AT

All praise is to Allah Ta'aala who has blessed us with a Deen wherein little actions reap tremendous rewards as expounded by His Beloved Rasul, Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W.), and blessings upon the Sahabah (R.A.) who spent everything for the upliftment of the Deen.

This leaflet is a summary of the booklet by Sheikhul Hadith Hazrat Moulana Fazlur Rahman Aazmi of Darul Uloom Islamia, Azaadville. May Allah grant him long life.

SHABE BARA'AT

Allah Ta'aala has, presented His bondsmen some special occasions wherein they have a golden opportunity of earning the mercy and forgiveness of Allah Ta'aala. Some explicit examples of these occasions are the month of Ramadaan and Laylatul Qadr. In the same mould is the fifteenth of Sha'baan. Several Ahaadith extol the tremendous merit of this occasion. Amongst them is the fact that countless people are forgiven by Allah Ta'aala during this blessed night. It is due to this reason that it is called "The Night of Bara'at" (i.e. the night wherein judgment of saviour from Jahannam and punishment is passed.).

However, it should be borne in mind that a vast majority of narrations declaring the benefit and virtue of this night are in fact quite weak.

The foundations of the Shari'ah is the Qur'aan, Sunnat and the lives of the Sahabah (R.A.).

None of the narrations regarding the excellence of this night of Bara'at are void of criticism and comment by the scholars of Hadith. Moulana Yusuf Binouri (R.A.) says:
"I have not come across any Sahih, Marfoo or Musnad Hadith regarding the excellence of the night." [Ma'aarifus Sunan, vol. 5, pg. 419]

The Muhaddith, Ibnu-Dihya, has also agreed that neither has anything authentic been narrated regarding the fifteenth night of Sha'baan nor has any specific Salaat been narrated for this night via reliable narrators. [Faydhul-Qadeer - Sharhul Jaamis-Sagheer, vol. 2, pg. 317]

Whilst even Allama Ibnu-Taymiyyah, a scholar notorious for refuting such things, also accepts the virtue of the night of Bara'at. He says:
"So many Ahaadith and reports exist regarding the excellence of the fifteenth night of Sha'baan that one compelled to accept that this night possess some virtue."

Some of the pious predecessors used to specially devote this night for Salaat. [Faydhul Qadeer, vol. 2, pg. 317]

Moulana Abdur Rahman Mubarakpuri writes in his commentary of Tirmidhi:
"The sheer number of Ahaadith regarding this night serves as proof against those people who refute the excellence of this night." [Tuhfatul-Ahwazi, vol. 2, pg. 53]

The virtue of this night is established from these Ahaadith is that from the very beginning of the night Allah Ta'aala turns with special mercy and attention towards the creation and forgives those who repent and seeks forgiveness. Every Muslim should therefore value this night. Turn towards Allah Ta'aala with sincere regret and shame over sins committed and make a promise never to return to sin again and seek forgiveness from Allah Ta'aala. Seek forgiveness for oneself and the rest of the Muslims, living and deceased. Have firm hope and resolution in the heart that Allah Ta'aala will surely show mercy and forgiveness.

UNFORTUNATE PEOPLE

It is understood from Ahaadith that even on this night, some are deprived of Allah's forgiveness. They are as follows:

1. Idolaters
2. Those who harbour enmity against others
3. Those who consume alcohol
4. Those who disobey their parents
5. Those who wear their trousers, kurtas, lungis, etc. below their ankles
6. Those who commit adultery and murders
7. Those who server family ties.

We can thus gauge the severity of these sins and need perpetually abstain from them as they are so grave that even on an occasion on which Allah Ta'aala's mercy comes to the fore, they still pose an obstacle to forgiveness.

SPECIAL VIRTUES OF THE NIGHT OF BARA'AT

The special virtues of the night of Bara'at are:

1. Contrary to other nights wherein the last third of the night has special blessings and Allah descends to the lowest Heaven during this section of the night, on the night of Bara'at the special rain of mercy and forgiveness of Allah Ta'aala begins to shower down right from the beginning of the night and continues right up till dawn.

2. The sins of countless people are pardoned. As already mentioned, Allah Ta'aala's descension during this night to the nearest Heaven occurs from the very beginning, unlike other nights. Furthermore, the number of pronouncements seeking out those who want forgiveness far supercede those which occur on other nights. [Hafiz Zaynud-deen Iraqi, Faydhul Qadeer, vol. 2, pg. 317]

It should be remembered that while all the narrations regarding the night of Bara'at are weak, the narrations regarding Allah Ta'aala's descending to the nearest Heaven during the last third of every night are totally correct.

VISITING THE GRAVEYARD ON THE NIGHT OF BARA'AT

Rasulullah (S.A.W.)'s awakening during the night and visiting the graveyard is recorded in some previously mentioned Ahaadith. However, visiting of the graveyard is not special characteristic of this night. Instead, it is proven from another authentic narration that Rasulullah (S.A.W.) would visit the graveyard during the last portion of every night.

There is no specific reference in the Ahaadith to the night of Bara'at or any other night. Furthermore it is understood from the Ahaadith that whenever it was Hazrat Aisha's (R.A.) for Rasulullah (S.A.W.) to spend the night with, he would visit the graveyard. [Muslim Shareef, pg.313, vol. 1]. Thus a wide and general application of this practice is understood. Aside from visiting the graveyard on the night of Bara'at, we should ponder to what extent our practice conforms to the authentic Ahaadith of Nabi (S.A.W.). Are we following the norm, or are our actions truly spurred by an intention to follow the Sunnah? The turn of Hazrat Aisha (R.A.) occurred once every week. It can thus be concluded from the above riwaayat that Nabi (S.A.W.) would visit the graveyard a minimum of once a week.

NO SPECIFIC PRESCRIBED SALAAT RESERVED FOR THE NIGHT OF BARA'AT

Allama Anwar Shah Kashmiri (R.A.) has written regarding the matter that the significance of the night of Bara'at is proven. There is however no proof for those weak and unacceptable narrations mentioned in certain books. [Alarfus-Shazi, pg. 156]

Allama Yusuf Binouri (R.A.) writes in Ma'arifus-Sunan that Abu Talib Makki recorded these narrations in his book Qutul-Quloob. Imam Ghazali, following Abu Talib Makki, did the same and Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani has followed them in his book Ghunyat-ut-Talibeen. They mention a narration of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) that discusses a Salaat of a hundred raka'ats. However, Ibnu-Jawzi

(R.A.) and others declared this narration to be a fabrication (Mowdhu'). [Maarifus Sunan, vol. 5, pg. 419]. Allama Dhahabi, Ibnu-Arraq, Suyuti, Mullla Ali Qari and other scholars of Hadith have vehemently refuted such Namaazes. [Those who desire further references should consult the books of Mowdhu'aat - Fabrications.]

NB. Imam Dhahabi says regarding the book Ghunya-tut-Talibeen that although it is the work of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, many additions were made to this book after his death. [Taqreer Moulana Shabeer Ahmed Uthmani, published by Jamea Islameah Dabhel, pg. 227. - This book cannot be relied upon. As far as Ahaadith is concerned, the opinion of the scholars of Ahaadith (Muhadditheen) is always considered and not that of Waa'izeen and Sufis.]

Mulla Ali Qadri has discussed this matter under a special chapter regarding the prescribed Namaazes of the night of Bara'at. After mentioning these Namaazes, he declares them to be unfounded and therefore writes that these Namaazes were introduced in the fourth century in Baitul-Muqaddas and thereafter Ahaadith were fabricated in order to support these baseless formulae. [Mowdhu'aatte-Kabeer, pg. 330, Beirut edition, also Tadhkiratul-Mowdhu'aat of Fattni, pg. 45]

FASTING ON THE FIFTEENTH OF SHA'BAAN IS NOT ESTABLISHED FROM HADITH

Some people are of the misconception that fasting on the fifteenth of Sha'baan is Sunnat. They have been deceived by the Hadith of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) that appears in Ibnu-Maja. The hadith states that Rasulullah (S.A.W.) said: "When the 15th night of Sha'baan comes, then spend this night in qiyaam (Salaah) and the day in fasting, for verily Allah descends during this night to the nearest heavens." [Ibnu Maja, pg. 99] This Hadith is however very weak. Some scholars have declared it as Mowdhu' (fabricated). One of the narrators of this Hadith is Ibnu-Abi-Jabrah, who has been accused of fabricating Ahadith. [Taqrib of Ibnu-Hajar, pg. 396] Imam Bukhari and others have also proved him to be weak. [Mizanul I'tidal, vol. 5, pg. 503] Thus this Hadith cannot be relied upon. Hence the fasting of this day should therefore not be regarded as Sunnat as such, since a weak narration is not sufficient to prove this fast as being Sunnat. An interesting point, also, is that fasting on this is only discussed in this weak Hadith.

FASTING DURING THE MONTH OF SHA'BAAN IS SUNNAT AND A CLEARLY ESTABLISHED PRACTICE OF THE SHARI'AH

Fasting in the month of Sha'baan, without the stipulation of any day, is proven from Rasulullah (S.A.W.). In fact, he used to fast excessively during this month. This is substantiated by a Hadith of Hazrat Aisha (R.A.) wherein she describes the fast of Nabi (S.A.W.). She says that aside from the month of Ramadaan, he never used to fast for an entire month. However, of the remaining months, he would fast in Sha'baan the most. [Bukhari, vol. 1, pg. 264]

THE NIGHT OF BARA'AT AND THE QUR'AAN

Has the night of Bara'at been mentioned in the Qur'aan? The most correct opinion is that the night of Bara'at has not been mentioned in the Qur'aan.

Hafiz Ibnu-Katheer writes that those like Ikraamh, who have explain the "blessed night" in the Qur'aan as the night of Bara'at are very distant from the correct interpretation. [Ma'arifus-Sunan, vol. 5, pg. 420]

IS SUSTENANCE, LIFE AND DEATH DECIDED ON THIS NIGHT?

Qazi Abubakr bin Arabi writes that there is no reliable Hadith regarding the fifteenth of Sha'baan from which it may be understood that sustenance, life and death are decided on this night. He has even gone as far as to say that there isn't any reliable narration concerning this night being the blessed one. [Ma'ariful Qur'aan, vol. 7, pg. 757] Since the significance of the night of Bara'at has been

mentioned in a number of narrations, and the narrations are not in conflict with any verse in the Qur'aan or any authentic narration, we do accept its significance. However, the opinion that sustenance, death, etc. are determined on this night is in conflict with the Qur'aan and is therefore unacceptable. It has been established from the Qur'aan that these decisions are passed to the Angels on Laylatul Qadr and not on the night of Bara'at. It is on this account that the research scholars have always rejected this opinion. The opinion of the lecturers would not be considered in this discussion, instead the opinion of the scholars of Tafseer and Hadith would be considered.

There is a Hadith of Hazrat Aisha (R.A.) mentioned in Mishkaat [pg. 115] on the authority of Baihaqi's Da'waatul-Kabeer. This Hadith discusses that the decisions are passed on this night regarding those that will be born, those that will die, the actions of man are placed in front of Allah and sustenance is revealed. The condition of this Hadith is unknown and it is possible the scholars of Tafseer and Hadith do not consider it reliable.

SOME STRANGE AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH SHABE-BARA'AT

The occasion of Shabe-Bara'at has become synonymous with some baseless beliefs and practices to mention just a few:

1. **Burning Bright Lights and Candles:** No mention can be found in any Hadith whether strong or fabricated, nor in any Islamic books. The Muslims of India being in close contact with the Hindus probably began imitating them in their practices, thus resulting in the introduction of this and various other bid'ats. [Ma-Thabata-bis-Sunnah, pg.215]

2. **Preparing of Sweetmeats:** Some consider this as being compulsory. Without it there can be no Shabe-Bara'at. This is absolutely baseless. Some say that this act gains significance from the fact that on the occasion of Uhud when the blessed tooth of Rasulullah (S.A.W.) became Shaheed, he had some halwa. Others say that Hazrat Hamza (R.A.) was martyred on this day and the sweetmeats are taken as his "Faatiha" (in commemoration of him). These are fabricated an concocted theories. How can it ever be possible when it is a known fact that the battle of Uhud in which Hazrat Hamza was martyred took place in Shawwal and not Sha'baan.

3. **Souls Visit Families:** Some people firmly believe that the souls of the deceased visit their families' homes and see whether any food has been prepared for their honour or not. Some people feel that if a person dies before Shabe-Bara'at and until his "Fatiha" is not made on Shabe-Bara'at, he is not counted amongst the dead. These are baseless ideologies that clearly contradict the Ahaadith.

4. **Distribution of Food:** Some feel that it is compulsory to distribute food on this night with the intention of Isale-Sawab. There is no link between this practice and the significance of the night. No special acts of charity etc. have been prescribed for this night. [Fatawa Imdadiyyah, vol. 4, pg. 27]

5. **Hadith on Rajab, Sha'baan and Ramadaan:** Some people quote the following narration in their lectures:
   Rasulullah (S.A.W.) said: "Rajab is Allah's month, Sha'baan is my month and Ramadaan is the month of my Ummah."

   It should be noted that this "Hadith" is a fabrication. [Akhbaare-Modhoo', pg. 329]

"O Allah! Show us that which is Haqq (Truth) and guide us to follow it and show us that which is Baatil (False) and guide us to refrain from it. May Allah shower His choicest blessings upon the best of His Creation, Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W.) and upon his descendants and his entire Ummah."

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